CLAIMS:

1. A system for managing policy services in an organization, the organization including a first network having a first set of resources and a second network remote from the first network having a second set of resources, the system comprising:

a first edge device associated with the first network, the first edge device configured to manage policies for the first network and the first set of resources in accordance with first policy settings stored in a first database;

a second edge device associated with the second network, the second edge device configured to manage policies for the second network and the second set of resources in accordance with second policy settings stored in a second database; and

a central policy server defining the first and second policy settings and managing the first and second edge devices from a single location, the central policy server being associated with a central database storing configuration information of the first and second edge devices, wherein the central database is organized according to a hierarchical object oriented structure.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the first and second databases are organized according to the hierarchical object oriented structure.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the configuration information includes the first and second policy settings.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the hierarchical object oriented structure includes a plurality of resource objects and policy objects for defining the first and second policy settings.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the central database and the first and second databases are Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) databases storing each resource object and policy object as an LDAP entry.

6. The system of claim 4, wherein the resource objects are selected from a group consisting of devices, users, hosts, services, and time.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the devices include the first and second edge devices, each device being associated with a set of users and a particular host.

8. The system of claim 6, wherein the hosts include the first and second networks.

9. The system of claim 4, wherein the policy objects are selected from a group consisting of bandwidth, firewall, administration, and virtual private network grouping.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the virtual private network grouping includes a virtual private network associated with one or more sites, users, and rules.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein each site includes one or more networks behind an edge device.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the rules are firewall rules providing access control over network traffic flowing through the virtual private network.

13. In a system including a first network having a first set of resources and a second network remote from the first network having a second set of resources, the first network being associated with a first edge device and a first database, and the second network being associated with a second edge device and a second database, the system further including a central policy server in communication with the first and second edge devices, the central policy server being associated with a central database, a method for managing policy services in the system comprising:

storing configuration information of the first and second edge devices in the central database, the central database being organized in a hierarchical object oriented structure;

storing first policy settings in the first database;

storing second policy settings in the second database;

managing policies for the first network and the first set of resources from the first edge device in accordance with the first policy settings stored in the first database;

managing policies for the second network and the second set of resources from the second edge device in accordance with the second policy settings stored in the second database; and

defining the first and second policy settings and managing the first and second edge devices from the central policy server.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the first and second databases are organized according to the hierarchical object oriented structure.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein the configuration information includes the first and second policy settings.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the hierarchical object oriented structure includes a plurality of resource objects and policy objects for defining the first and second policy settings.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the central database and the first and second databases are Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) databases storing each resource object and policy object as an LDAP entry.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the resource objects are selected from a group consisting of devices, users, hosts, services, and time.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the devices include the first and second edge devices, each device being associated with a set of users and a particular host.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein the hosts include the first and second networks.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein the policy objects are selected from a group consisting of bandwidth, firewall, administration, and virtual private network grouping.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the virtual private network grouping includes a virtual private network associated with one or more sites, users, and rules.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein each site includes one ~~or more networks behind an edge device.~~

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the rules are firewall rules providing access control over network traffic flowing ~~through the virtual private network.~~